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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY SCHOOLS IN
NORTH CAROLINA FROM
1860-1900

BY

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INTRODUCTION

This study attempts to give both the origin and development of a part of the movement for city schools.

The factors that aided in this movement, such as private donations, the Peabody fund, school laws and the levying of special taxes for schools in certain districts demonstrate the fact that the deep thinkers and planners of the day would let no opposing forces overwhelm them. As an illustration of this we have the interesting history of the Greensboro schools--the first public graded school system in North Carolina.

CHAPTER I

General Survey of Conditions in the State

No one can understand the present educational development of North Carolina unless he knows something of the history of the state from 1860 to 1887. In many respects this is the most interesting period in all the state's history. It was a formative period in as true a sense as was the colonial period in our history. A period which is hardly yet known to many of this generation. The clash of the elemental passions of hatred, of selfishness, of despair, with ideals of hope, toleration, philanthropy, vision, and all the other ideals of civilization make this period one of surpassing interest.

We of this generation have heard strident echoes of the conflicts of that period, the quarrel words have been dinned into our ears not for the purpose of instruction but to cause us to vote the straight ticket. But out of this came the constitution of 1868, a constitution which really for the first time recognized public education in the same sense in which we now know it. The school law of 1868 came out of that period. That school law recognized local taxation for the first time in our educational history. This constitution and the school law made at least a four month's school term an obligation on the state, the county, and the township, and they declared that 75%

of the poll taxes should be devoted to public education. For the first time in our history, we had a state tax levied for educational purposes, and we saw the state recognizing the obligation to educate the black children of the state. It was no small gain to our civilization that the fundamental law and the school statutes of our state declared for all these things. And we must also remember that the very men this generation has been taught to denounce from infancy as only bad, put into the bill of rights of our constitution the following declaration: "Religion, morality and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged." And the people have a right to the privilege of education and it is the duty of the state to guard and maintain that right.

And while this period has its dark spots, every right thinking North Carolinian and every child born into our social order must be thankful that out of these dark days these educational safeguards of our very life originated.

In a word, public schools for all the people were originated during this period. Apparently there was little success in the effort. It was a time of party strife, society was greatly disorganized as a result

of the Civil War and as a result of the activities of self seeking politicians, the school taxes were imperfectly collected and paid into the treasury. There were no large towns, the flower of the population of the state had been left forever on the battlefields of Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania. Congress was threatening to pass a civil rights bill which would destroy separate schools for each race; the sober thought of the people was unable to speak firmly and decidedly in favor of such public schools as the constitution of 1868 provided for. There was much poverty and much aversion to taxes of any kind. Many doubted the wisdom of educating those who were so recently slaves; the sparse population and bad roads made such cooperation as was necessary to establish good schools next to impossible. The township system of schools opposed the individualistic small district system in vogue before the Civil War. There were constant attempts to go back to that system, and, finally, the courts were reactionary on the subject of public education by taxation and were always ready to declare that schools were not a necessary expense of government. But out of these discordant times the town schools of North Carolina were born. The story of their birth and their early growth is the most interesting chapter in our educational history.

CHAPTER II

Attitude Toward Public Schools

There was in North Carolina at this time, 1860-1900, a strong opposition to taxation for public schools. Very frequently the friends of the public schools heard this argument, "It is robbery to tax one man to educate another man's children." This sentiment prevailed to some extent everywhere and those who held it seemed to regard public education as a charity. They were, perhaps, willing to dole out a little education to the poor on the same principle that they would give them a loaf of bread to keep them from starving.

Such persons reason from other premises than those which the founders of our republic used in support of public education. The foundation of public education is broad statesmanship and not charity. The friends of the public schools at this time and in the past did not think that their property and their lives were safe in the hands of ignorant voters and they did not think that their free governmental and religious institutions could long exist without liberal provisions made by the state for the education of all voters. They believed that the rich man, who did not even think enough of the public schools to patronize them by sending his own children to them, was made

richer by them, in that he was made securer in the possession of his wealth and that verily his contribution to them did not impoverish him.

Besides, it is a fact that any man may know by a little investigation, that general intelligence, material prosperity and power go together. We have in our own country many illustrations of this fact in the history of states and communities. Perhaps Prussia affords one of the most notable illustrations of this fact.

After the seven years' war Prussia was prostrate, exhausted, and apparently ruined. Her wise king, in his dilemma, sought the counsel of the great men of his kingdom and decided that they should be liberally educated, to the end that all the natural resources might be utilized. A splendid system of public education was put into operation. The results were slow, but sure and wonderful. This system of education put Prussia in the leadership of all the nations of Europe and enabled her to triumph over all her enemies gloriously. It not only gave her material prosperity and power, but it made her great in literature, science, art, and philosophy.

One writer has said, "We, the people of North Carolina, have boasted of our natural resources and have put ourselves in the race with our sister states

for material prosperity, and we are saying to the world that here is the best place to make investments of capital and the best place to live. We invite capital and skilled labor to come among us. Let us not forget the lessons to be learned from Prussia and the states and communities of our own country that so plainly teach us that universal intelligence is not only safety to life and property, but that it is the foundation also of the development of our natural resources and the foundation of power and material prosperity."

The other ground of opposition to the public schools in this state, and in the South generally, is the burden cast upon an already impoverished white population to educate the negroes, who play so small a proportion of the taxes. This ground of opposition is intensified by the belief that is more or less prevalent that education spoils the colored people as laborers, to their own damage and the damage of the white people, who own almost all the lands. It is said that when you "educate a negro you spoil a field hand." If education is to be given them in any liberal sense by the state they must recognize it not as a means of relief from labor, but as a help to successful labor.

As prosperity and peace settle over the state these oppositions are overcome and we find the public schools of North Carolina coming to the front. Not without struggles and battles to keep above water but always with the determination to prove that they believe that public education is a part of modern civilization and it cannot be dispensed with or successfully resisted--it must go forward.

CHAPTER III

First Legislative Attempt to Improve School Law

The first school law was regarded by its friends as merely a beginning, as nothing more than an experiment, or rather a start by means of a small sum of forty dollars offered to a district in order to find out just how much was needed to enable a school system to accomplish its purpose. Following the state-wide vote on taxation for schools in 1839 and during the short while between that election and the next legislature, an attempt was made in some of the counties to open their common schools. Therefore the legislature of 1840-41 went to Raleigh with some practical knowledge gained by observation and experience at home, of what a school law should contain, and they endeavored to make additions to and such changes in the former law as they saw necessary. (1)

Under the law of 1840-41 the duties and privileges of the school committees were defined. The fourteenth section gave great latitude in two very important matters. It enacted that any branch of

(1) Noble, M.C.S., A History of the Public Schools in North Carolina. University of North Carolina Press; Chapel Hill; 1930. Pages 69-70.

English education might be taught in the schools and that all white children under twenty-one years of age might attend the school in their district. The last clause, literally obeyed, would have permitted the enrollment to start with the cradle and end with the attainment of one's majority.⁽¹⁾

The one great bone of contention in the legislature was the method to be used in the distribution of the dividends of the Literary Fund. The legislature of 1840-41 was determined to act as it pleased in the distribution of the income of the Literary Fund not only for the future but in regard to the past. It went so far as to direct that whatever money had been paid to the counties under the law of 1838-39 at the rate of \$40 for each district in the county must be added to the income on hand when the next distribution was to be made. The law of 1840-41 was a great step forward in that it provided some definite machinery for the organization and administration of the common schools but there was utter absence of definite control lodged in the hands of a competent executive officer in the state or the county. As we have seen, it endeavored to fix the school age, the content of the course of

(1) Noble, M.C.S., A History of the Public Schools in North Carolina. University of North Carolina Press; Chapel Hill; 1930. Pages 70-74.

study, and assigned a few definite powers and duties to teachers, committeemen, and the boards of county superintendents. This law was the beginning of the almost ceaseless but necessary school legislation that has come down through the decade with the common schools from that day to the present time.

The Wilmington Journal of April 19, 1860, tells that the night before, the superintendent of common schools of the state had, by request, addressed the Library Association and the citizens generally in the town hall on the subject of education and that "he spoke for an hour and a half to a very attentive and deeply interested audience." The editor in commenting on the address highly complimented Mr. Wiley's manner of speaking and his treatment of facts. He also expressed the hope that, as a result of the meeting, Wilmington would soon have an efficient system of common schools for teaching the masses from the alphabet to the highest branches necessary for entrance into college or into practical business life. A committee was appointed to collect all the facts, details, and arguments bearing on the subject, and to call a town meeting to hear and discuss their report when they were ready to present it. The committee consisted of Thomas A. Martin, G. Potter, R. H. Cowan, A. J. Derosset,

E. Murray, and S. D. Wallace. The fact that this committee never made a report may well be attributed to the increasing political excitement of the times. The meeting shows, however, that Superintendent Wiley was moving with all his might to bring about the establishment of graded schools in the larger towns, and that the Wilmington Library Association, representing the best thought in town, was ready to act with him in his patriotic efforts.

Mr. Wiley, in his letter to the examiners, May, 1860, just after his speech at Wilmington in advocacy of a graded school system for that town, declared strongly in favor of a forward movement in the field of public education. He stressed the value of graded schools and expressed a desire to have them in the state but did not believe that the time had come to establish a general graded school system. He strongly impressed his belief that graded schools were becoming more and more necessary to supply the primary educational wants of a community. The graded schools he had in mind were apparently not schools for the lowest primary classes but additional and more advanced schools for the completion of a thorough course in the studies already

begun in the elementary schools, together with the addition of geography and grammar thereby fitting one with the knowledge that he would need in ordinary business or that would enable him to begin the study of the classics for college entrance. The two schools correspond practically to our present primary grammar school.

At the fifth annual meeting of the State Educational Association held in Wilmington in November, 1860, the regular order of business called for a report of the committee on graded schools which had been appointed the year before in which Professor C. W. Smythe outlined in detail a system of graded schools with which he had been connected before coming to North Carolina. It provided primary, grammar, and high school instruction, thereby embracing the complete curriculum from the lowest primary to preparation for college entrance. This report, which was received with great favor, may be found in the North Carolina Journal of Education, January, 1861. At the following meeting of the Association, held in Greensboro, November, 1861, the subject of "Normal and Graded Schools" as intimately connected, was then discussed, and a committee appointed to report on the subject at

the next annual meeting, but a bill carefully prepared by the general superintendents provided for graded schools which would give advanced instruction in the studies to be added to suit the wants of the people. The counties were left free to adopt the graded school so that there would be no change in the public school system in any county until the voters were ready for it. This bill, with the approval of the committee on education, had been before the legislature when the war began, but in the rush of other business in the beginning days of the great conflict, it failed to become a law.⁽¹⁾

In Wiley's Tenth Annual Report, 1860, he came out more strongly in favor of the establishment of graded schools. His argument this time was reinforced by new facts that had appeared since his letter of May, 1860, to the county examiners. As the common schools improved, there had come a necessity for higher schools in which common school pupils could advance further in their studies.

(1) Noble, M.C.S., History of the Public Schools in North Carolina. University of North Carolina Press; Chapel Hill; 1930. Pages 255-257.

This was one of the great facts that had brought about the rapid growth of academies, seminaries, and colleges. But the seminaries and academies were not parts of the state's educational system. There was a wide gap between, and it became wider and wider as the academy pulled further and further away from the lower schools in its efforts to prepare its students for college. Mr. Wiley believed in a college education, yet he did not believe that the traditional subjects of Latin and Greek in the colleges were suited to the needs of the masses. He did not believe that the great body of the people would ever need a knowledge of classical literature in the ordinary pursuits of life. Hence he wanted a school between the common schools and the academy in which a pupil would be instructed in those branches which would be of practical value in business, and at the same time would prepare him to take a classical course should he desire to do so.⁽¹⁾

As time went on, additional reasons for establishing graded schools were found in the disastrous results of the war. Young men were coming home daily from the army physically unable to do manual

(1) Noble, M.C.S. History of the Public Schools in North Carolina. University of North Carolina Press; Chapel Hill; 1930. Page 258.

labor because of wounds received at the battle front. Gratitude dictated that these young soldiers should be trained to teach and thereby become self supporting, and that the children of poor soldiers who had died in defense of their country should be educated in the graded schools that ought to be established and made free of tuition for both the disabled soldiers and the orphan children of the Confederate dead. A bill to accomplish this was prepared by Wiley and brought before the legislature of 1863. Thus, the second graded school bill was defeated possibly for the very reason that had been pleaded in behalf of its adoption.

A graded school bill was finally passed by the legislature during the winter of 1864-65. It contained practically the same provisions as the bill which failed to pass the year before. Its purpose was to enlarge and extend the sphere of usefulness of the common schools by providing for the establishment of a graded school district in the state into which pupils who had completed the studies in the common schools might enter for advanced instruction. The bill was ratified Friday, December 23, 1864, at the very hour when the defenders at Fort Fisher were sighting in the offing Admiral

Porter's fleet coming on toward the fort to make a long expected attack upon the "Malakoff of the South", the gateway of the Confederacy. It was ratified less than four months before the surrender of Lee at Appamattox and of Johnston at Durham. Its ratification at this time, when our leaders must have known that the closing days of the war were near at hand, tells us that amid the gloom and certainty of approaching disaster, our lawmakers were not forgetting the children of the state nor the disabled heroes of four long years of war.

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- (1) Noble, M.C.S., History of the Public Schools in North Carolina. University of North Carolina Press; Chapel Hill; 1930. Pages 260-262.

CHAPTER IV

The Work and Influence of the Peabody Fund

Perhaps the most wholesome and beneficial influence affecting education in all the Southern states, especially during the dark days which followed the war, came through the work of the Peabody Fund. This endowment was created in 1867 by George Peabody, a native of Massachusetts, who spent the last thirty years of his life in London. There he accumulated a vast fortune, and at the close of the war he became especially interested in the encouragement of education in the destitute Southern states. Accordingly, in February, 1867, he created a trust fund of \$1,000,000 to which in July, 1869, he added another million, to encourage and assist educational effort in "those portions of our beloved and common country which have suffered from the destructive ravages, and not less disastrous consequences of civil war." These two million constituted the bulk of the productive capital. Nearly a million and a half in Mississippi and Florida bonds proved unproductive, being among securities which those states repudiated. As a result Mississippi and Florida were omitted in the distribution of the income from the Peabody Fund, from 1886 to 1892, at which latter date, on motion of ex-President Hayes, and by an unanimous vote of

the trustees the two states were reinstated as beneficiaries.⁽¹⁾

Mr. Peabody named as trustees of this fund sixteen men of prominence and distinction; William A. Graham represented North Carolina. In his letter, dated at Washington, February 7, 1867, creating the trust, Mr. Peabody said, "I feel most deeply, therefore that it is the duty and privilege of the most favored and wealthy portions of our nation to assist those who are less fortunate; and with the wish to discharge, as far as I am able, my own responsibility in this matter, as well as to gratify my desire to aid those to whom I am bound by so many ties of attachment and regard, I give to you, gentlemen, most of whom have been my personal and especial friends, the sum of one million dollars, to be by you and your successors held in trust and the income thereof used and applied in your discretion for the promotion and encouragement of intellectual, moral, or industrial education among the young of the more destitute portions of the Southern and Southwestern States of our Union; my purpose being, that the benefits intended shall be distri-

(1) Knight, Edgar W., Public School Education in North Carolina. The University Press; Cambridge, Massachusetts; 1916. Page 271.

buted among the entire population, without other distinction than their needs and the opportunities of usefulness to them."

The following resolutions, adopted March 19, 1867, embody the plan of the trustees:

1. "Resolved, That for the present the promotion of primary or common-school education, by such means or agencies as now exist, or may need to be created, be the leading object of the Board in the use of the fund placed at its disposal.
2. Resolved, That in aid of the above general design, and as promotive of the same, the Board will have in view the furtherance of the normal school education for the preparation of teachers, as well as by the endowment of scholarships in existing Southern institutions as by the establishing of normal schools, and the aiding of normal schools as may now be in operation in the Southern and Southwestern States; including such measures as may be feasible, and as experience shall dictate to be expedient, for the promotion of education in the application of science to the industrial pursuits of human life."

A third resolution, provided for the appointment of a general agent, "of the highest qualifications," to whom was to be committed, with the advice of an executive committee, the entire charge of carrying out Mr. Peabody's designs. Under this resolution, Rev. Dr. Barnas Sears, President of Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, was offered the appointment which he accepted March 30, 1867. It may well be questioned whether any other man could have brought more valuable training and experience and greater adaptability and resourcefulness to the delicate and difficult duties of the position. He soon fixed his residence in Staunton, Virginia, so as to be in close communication with the region for which he labored so wisely and so ably for thirteen years.

The directions of Mr. Peabody were that the principal of the fund should remain intact for thirty years. It could not be expended, neither could it be increased by accruing interest; but the method of using the annual revenue, as well as the final disposition of the original endowment, was left entirely to the discretion of the trustees. The solution of this latter question

was, by common consent, left to future developments and the ripe wisdom of the self-perpetuating board of trustees. The immediate need was obviously in the field of elementary instruction for the masses of Southern youth, and the Board early determined to give assistance to public free schools. The policy of the trustees was to cooperate, whenever possible, with all state authorities, so as to prevent disorder and to secure unity and strength of action. The funds were not to be distributed as a charity to the indigent; this had been a more prevalent ante-bellum educational practice in several of the Southern States, proving inadequate to any effectual relief, wasteful and inefficient, and productive of no permanent and valuable results. Moreover, the funds were not to be appropriated according to population or according to comparative community distribution, but on the sound principle of helping those communities which would help themselves. The invariable adherence of the Peabody Trustees to this principle, throughout the operation of the fund, was probably the greatest single educational blessing the South ever enjoyed.

The plan formulated for the promotion of educational enterprise was designed from the outset to stimulate and encourage local initiative and

community effort. All schools aided by the fund were to have at least one hundred pupils each, with a teacher for every fifty, and an average term of ten months. The sum of \$300 was usually given to a school with an enrollment of one hundred, \$600 to one having an enrollment of two hundred, and \$1000 to one having as many as three hundred pupils enrolled.

The policy of the fund and its administration was thus outlined. "Free schools for the whole people" became its motto and aim. And the conditions on which every appropriation was made were just those needed to secure cooperation with and security for the plan. No other method could have created or assisted in creating a wholesome educational sentiment or could have had the effect of encouraging local taxation for public schools. The absence of any element of charity in the plan of distribution, as a means of temporary relief, is a living witness to the judgment which marked the entire administration of the trust.

The States aided by the fund were those which belonged to the Confederacy and West Virginia. North Carolina was one of the first to participate in the distribution. Only a few months after the creation of the trust, arrangements were near-

ly completed for aiding a school in Salisbury to the amount of \$500, and at the same time efforts were made to secure an appropriation for Hillsboro. More work would have been undertaken that year but for the absence from the state of William A. Graham, the North Carolina trustee, who was very familiar with the State's educational needs, and for whose personal influence there was probably no substitute. The amounts received by the towns and communities of the State gradually increased so that by 1877 the sum of \$87,600 had been appropriated to them from the Peabody Fund.

The sum of \$22,000 was available for the State of North Carolina in 1868. But on the advice of Calvin H. Wiley, former superintendent of public instruction, Mr. Sears visited only the larger towns, where arrangements to comply with the conditions of the Peabody appropriations were completed.⁽¹⁾

By April, 1869, a new school law had been passed providing for the establishment and maintenance of schools for the education of all the children of the State. State funds for educational purposes, amounting to about \$300,000

(1) Knight, Edgar W., Public School Education in North Carolina. The University Press; Cambridge, Massachusetts; 1916. Pages 276-277.

would be available and would afford accommodations for about 75,000 children. The Peabody Board could not act as a great stimulant in inducing cities and towns to furnish funds supplementary to the aid appropriated by Mr. Sears, which in 1869 amounted to \$6350.

By this time Wilmington was maintaining free schools by voluntary subscriptions amounting to \$7500 and \$1500 received from the Peabody Fund.⁽¹⁾

The public school system established by the legislature in 1868-69 had struggled through its first year with as much progress as was expected in times of such violent party strife. Both coldness and opposition had confronted it. The only encouraging growth of educational sentiment was found in the towns and communities which were being stimulated to local effort by the Peabody Board. Wilmington assumed control and support of its schools, which had previously been maintained by private contribution, the city adopting them and making appropriations to their support, and the Peabody Board continuing its aid of \$1000.⁽²⁾

(1) Knight, Edgar W., Public School Education in North Carolina; The University Press; Cambridge, Massachusetts; 1916. Pages 279-280.

(2) Knight, Edgar W., Public School Education in North Carolina; The University Press; Cambridge, Massachusetts; 1916. Page 280.

The following year did not see very many encouraging signs of educational growth in North Carolina, and in the public mind, for the matter of free schools was not so well settled there as in most of the other Southern States. The principal of general education by public support had been agreed upon as the correct principle; but its application, in North Carolina at least, proved a more difficult task. Only in cities and towns, and largely in those which are being aided by the Peabody Board, were any serious efforts being made to maintain free public schools during these stormy days. The wisdom of the original policy of the trustees was confirmed by their action in the face of discouraging circumstances of the time. They early saw the necessity of giving preference to places which would by their example, exert the widest influence upon the surrounding country. Any other method would have been wasteful, inefficient, and probably injurious; an unwise distribution of their funds could easily have been demoralizing to the very region whose common sense and practical effort needed to be aroused in
(1)
favor of education.

(1) Knight, Edgar W., Public School Education in North Carolina.

The University Press; Cambridge, Massachusetts; 1916. Pages 281-284.

CHAPTER V

Private Schools or Secondary Instruction

Schools for secondary instruction were numerous, but it was impossible to collect full and reliable statistics concerning them. The State Superintendents of Public Instruction were unable to get any reliable information in regard to the number and their work, because no provision was made for collecting this information. The reports that were made to the United States Commissioner of Education were meagre and unsatisfactory, and private individual effort to reach them proved unsuccessful.⁽¹⁾

A stranger reading the catalogues and announcements of the private schools might be led to believe that many of them offered advantages for study superior to the excellent fitting schools of the East, but to one who has had an insight into their management and was acquainted with their management, such a supposition was impossible.

One of the first criticisms is that they undertook too much. Some of these schools endeavored to offer the advantages of a college, while many of the so-called colleges were in reality secondary schools, but in attempting to

(1) Smith, Charles Lee, The History of Education in North Carolina. Government Printing Office, Washington; 1888. Page 128.

place themselves on a higher plane than they were fitted to occupy, they lost in thoroughness and efficiency.

As a rule no well ordered system of study and student advancement was provided in these schools, though there were several notable exceptions to which reference will be made. The most noticeable defect was in the primary training of the pupil. Proper attention was not given to the ground work of his education. He was advanced from the primary to the preparatory department before the essential rudiments of an education had been mastered. The charge for annual tuition was determined by the student's grade. The schools were private property; the teachers were ambitious, therefore the usual result was that the child was assigned work beyond his capacity. Parents as well as teachers were to be blamed for this. ⁽¹⁾ Many parents regarded their children as intellectual prodigies, and were dissatisfied if they were not rapidly promoted in school. In the eyes of the parents the best teacher was the one who advanced the children fastest. If the teacher attempted to hold the child to primary work longer than the parents thought was necessary, they withdrew their patronage and sent ^{him} to

(1) Smith, Charles Lee, The History of Education in North Carolina. Government Printing Office, Washington; 1888.

one who would gratify their vanity. It was pleasing to the pupil to be advanced from class to class. He was not yet old enough to realize the advantage of thorough preparation. It was patent, therefore, that the self interest of the teacher, the vanity of the parents, and the whim of the child, as pictured above, tended to superficiality.⁽¹⁾

After the student had been advanced from the primary to the preparatory department, the object in most cases was to get him in college as soon as possible, or if he was not fitting for college, to silverplate him with a business course which he was assured would answer his purposes in practical life without the necessity of submitting to college drills and discipline for four years.

Instead of providing a broad and liberal course of study, the object of most of these schools was to give the student enough Latin, Greek, and mathematics to enable him to enter college with credit, and in but few instances was this result obtained. Only the outlines of history were taught and this in a superficial way. The courses in political and physical geography were short and unsatisfactory; and the student was given such a meagre course in his own language and literature that in after life

(1) Smith, Charles Lee, The History of Education in North Carolina. Government Printing Office, Washington; 1888. Page 129.

as a writer and speaker he was often made to feel the deficiencies of his early training.

From the preparatory school the student went to college, passed the entrance examinations in Latin, Greek, and mathematics, entered upon advanced studies, and at the end of four years was presented to the world as a graduate; but in few cases can be said to be educated, in the full sense of what the word implies, for the defects of preliminary training were too often manifest.

For the more than one hundred private schools reporting from North Carolina, excepting only a few institutions, the above is true, not only for this State, but for many others of the Union, especially in the South.

The United States has the strongest and powerful forces of race prejudice. In the old time belief that a colored man could be made an intelligent worker only by being whipped and beat carried out with prejudice which have been over-ruled, and possibly adequate provision for training illiterate boys and colored men who might have been possible.

[1] Davis, M.D., A History of the Public Schools in North Carolina; University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1908. Page 296.

CHAPTER VI

The Public Graded School Idea

The native and widespread desire for education in North Carolina through and by means of the public schools as the only agency by which all the children of the state might be reached was checked by several forces that had been produced or intensified by the effect of the Civil War. The general poverty of the people was the first force, but as the years passed conditions began to improve. Yet, for a long time the forces opposing education used this as a means for blocking any progress in the educational movement.

Educational inefficiency of the Reconstruction time was another force that chained education. The blight of that period remained in many localities for years.⁽¹⁾

The third force was the natural and powerful force of race prejudice. If the old time belief that a citizen could be made an intelligent voter only by being educated had been carried out much prejudice would have been overridden, and possibly adequate provisions for banishing illiteracy from the colored masses might have been possible. This

(1) Noble, M.C.S.; A History of the Public Schools in North Carolina; University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill; 1930. Page 398.

race prejudice was naturally intensified by the blunders of the carpet bag rule immediately following the Civil War.

Many political leaders and influential private citizens refused to let the forces of poverty, bitter memories or race prejudice drive them into opposition to the public schools, and institute campaigns brought about a change in public opinion in favor of a more liberal spirit for universal education. In the cities and towns public sentiment was crystalizing in favor of a local public school system, even at the cost of higher taxes from 1870 to 1885.⁽¹⁾

The graded schools in North Carolina originated in the cities and towns after the Civil War. These schools which were aided by donations from the Peabody Fund were, because of the large numbers of pupils enrolled, generally organized as graded schools. But due to the fact that they did not have the sustaining vitality of local support through local taxation or regular and sufficient private donation they were short lived. It will be remembered that Calvin H. Wiley even before the

(1) Noble, M.C.S., A History of the Public Schools in North Carolina. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill; 1930. Page 399.

Civil War advocated the establishment of graded schools to be supported by local taxation to supplement the common school funds of towns and cities. He was successful in so far that he had a graded school bill enacted which obtained no results because of the fall of the Confederacy. After the readmission of the state into the Union in 1868, there were frequent attempts to secure a graded school law for cities and towns, but nothing was accomplished until 1870 when the Greensboro Graded School was established.⁽¹⁾

Major S. M. Finger, Superintendent of Public Instruction, in his report for 1885-86, says, "These schools have done a great deal of good, not only in the communities in which they are located, but to the whole State. They are examples of the possible efficiency, popularity and cheapness of education at public expense.

"They are becoming so efficient as to command respect and patronage of all classes of our people. I wish that every citizen of the state could spend a day in one of these well managed schools, because I think he would go away with a higher appreciation of the safe practicability of public schools"

(1) Noble, M.C.S., A History of the Public Schools in North Carolina. University of North Carolina Press; Chapel Hill; 1930. Page 399.

By special acts of the Legislature, towns are permitted to vote upon the establishment of the schools. The funds for their support are raised by special taxation and taxation under the common school law.

Each school is usually divided into about ten grades, each grade having a teacher and room to itself. One year is required to complete the studies in a grade. By an uniform system of examinations pupils are advanced to higher grades. In nearly all of these schools there is a library for the benefit of the pupils and a pedagogical library for the teachers. The teachers usually meet twice a month to discuss methods of teaching, study approved works on pedagogy, and have review lessons on the subjects taught in the schools. Students in these schools are prepared for entrance into the colleges and universities of the State.

Mr. S. F. Tomlison, secretary of the board of trustees of the Durham Graded Schools, who has given much study and attention to the educational systems, gives it as his opinion that graded schools properly conducted are preeminently the schools for the towns and cities of the South, be-

cause they afford the greatest and most improved facilities to all classes alike for obtaining an education free, or for the least money.

Greensboro, has been one of North Carolina's foremost leaders in the field of education. It seems only fair and reasonable to agree with those noted city fathers and leaders that the prosperity, progress and happiness of the famous Gate City must be in a large degree contingent on the efficiency and leadership of her public schools.

It is now generally conceded, although reluctantly by a few historians, that in 1870 the first system of public schools in the state of North Carolina was established in Greensboro.

Several years before the graded schools were organized, there existed in Greensboro a free public school, and it was held in a small one-room brick building located just behind the old Presbyterian Church on the old Highway Street school site.

Before the days of reconstruction in the South, the great mass of people was not full to the idea of public education, and the Greensboro free school did not receive the patronage of what was called the "better element". It was argued that it was unfair for the white people to be tax-

CHAPTER VII

Greensboro Schools

Greensboro, since the time she received her charter, has been one of North Carolina's foremost leaders in the field of education. It seems only fair and reasonable to agree with those noted city fathers who declare that the prosperity, progress and happiness of the famous Gate City must be in a large degree contributed to the efficiency and leadership of her public schools.

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Several years before the graded schools were organized, there existed in Greensboro a free public school, and it was held in a small one-room brick building located just behind the old Presbyterian Church on the old Lindsay Street School site.

Before the days of reconstruction in the South, the great mass of people was not sold to the idea of public education, and the Greensboro free school did not receive the patronage of what was called the "better element". It was argued that it was unfair for the white people to be tax-

ed to educate the negro; that the free schools would not be patronized by those who would be called upon to pay the taxes because they could afford to send their children to one of the four private schools which then existed in Greensboro; and, third, that no good could possibly result in an attempt to educate the masses, because at least three-fourths of the people, they believed, were not capable of receiving an education.

The crude methods of presentation and the disorganization of the old free school was not at all conducive to a rapid melioration of public censure. It was rather a typical scene to see the schoolmaster bring his banjo to school; after hanging it on a nail he would take a flat board and pound upon the side of the school building to announce that it was time to "take up books!"

What an unusual sight for this more modern generation to see grown men taking identically the same work as their six and seven-year-old infant neighbors! But what did they care? They were there because they wanted to learn something. Very often they did not choose to take more than one subject. If not, that was their own business, because the teacher was

there to teach the pupils what they wanted to know, provided the desired subjects came within a very limited group. Those who were ambitious to be surveyors would perhaps be interested only in arithmetic, and they would not bother their brains with other unnecessary subjects. When the teacher felt an urge or desire to hear a recitation he would call for "that tow-headed youngster in the back of the room" to come and recite his spelling lesson, or for that man at his left to tell him what he had learned about multiplication and division. There was no semblance of organized class work.

By the year 1870, the citizens of Greensboro had experienced a change of attitude toward public education, and in the charter by which Greensboro ceased to be a town and became a city, which was ratified March 28, 1870, there was included the following clause:

"Section 74. That the corporate limits of the city shall constitute a school district, and that all taxes levied upon the citizens by the state for school purposes, shall be expended in conformity with the regulations of the State, in establishing graded schools within the city, and

should the amount thus realized not be sufficient to keep the schools open eight months in the year, in that event the commissioners shall appropriate a sufficient amount of money from any funds to supply the deficiency."

Mr. Alex. McIver, who was then Superintendent of Public Instruction, went before the legislature and urged the adoption of this clause, and said no town in the state should be chartered that did not make special provisions for public schools. He complimented Greensboro for its action, and said it was the first in the state to take such a forward step.

The charter was ratified at the May election, and the city took control of the free school building on the present site of Lindsay graded school. It was a small brick building of one room; but the city contracted with Symoure Steele, then a member of the board of aldermen, and C. N. McAdoo, to enlarge the building--making five schoolrooms and a chapel. This two-story plant was completed in the summer of 1870, and on September 6 of that year the doors were opened for the first graded school in the state with Jesse R. Wharton as principal, Misses Sallie Brent, Priscilla Macon, and Annie Litchford as teachers, and two hundred

children enrolled in eight grades.

So popular was this school that many of the citizens sent their children to it. It soon became apparent that a specific amount was necessary to keep the school from being embarrassed, hence in 1875 several amendments to the charter were asked for and granted by the legislature. Among them was the following:

"Section 2. The commissioners may increase the rate of taxation prescribed in section 45 and 55 one hundred per cent; provided that the additional taxes collected from property by authority of this section shall be applied for school purposes only."

Colonel James T. Morehead was Senator at this time and made a gallant fight for the amendment, which met with some opposition because it was proposed to double the tax on property and give the colored children their pro-rata of the money. Colonel Morehead quieted this opposition by amending section 5, which empowered this increased tax, to be submitted to a separate ballot at the next election for mayor and commissioners. When this election was held in May,

only eight votes were polled against it. And to the credit of Greensboro it is to be noted that the amended charter 1874-75 like the charter of 1870, permitted no distinction between the races in the division of the school fund. It is also interesting to note that during the same year the Percy Street graded school for colored children was opened with a seating capacity of three hundred and fifty-six.

In 1886, when the city began to make decided growth, Judge David Schenck was elected a member of the board of aldermen, and made chairman of the school committee. His wise foresight and generous impulses which endeared him to the city and state, prompted him to desire better school buildings. The first fruit of his work in this direction was the handsome brick building of Lindsay Street graded school which was completed in 1887, and equipped with modern school furniture (with a seating capacity of five hundred and eighty-three).

In May, 1891, the corporate limits were extended--making the city two miles square. In September of the same year a school for each race was opened south of the Southern Railway. This

gave Greensboro four graded schools--two for each race.

The growth of the schools continued from year to year. By 1893 so urgent were the demands for more school room than was afforded by Belleview, on McCulloch street, a bond issue of \$9,000 was made for building the Asheboro street graded school, of which Superintendent of Public Instruction Mebane said in his report for 1897-98, "It is one of the handsomest and best equipped public school buildings in the State." And he adds, "It is a significant fact that Greensboro has not only provided splendid buildings for her own schools; but she has put \$41,000 in buildings for the Normal and Industrial College for white girls, and Mechanical College for the colored race. Probably no other town in the State or in the South has a larger percentage of its school population enrolled in the public school."

In order to meet the demands of the children in the western part of the city in 1900, the Curry building of the State Normal was tendered the city. It had a seating capacity of three hundred and fifty-three, with an enrollment of three hundred and thirty-four for the session of 1904.

CHAPTER VIII

Wilmington Schools

A history of education in the Cape Fear section is, of course, similar to and in accordance with the State's educational policy, modified to a certain extent by needs, local influences and ideas of individuals.

In 1825 a "Literary Fund" was created. Bartlett Yancey was the author of this important bill, but it was not until 1839 that the first bill providing for free schools in every county was passed.⁽¹⁾

A more elaborate system of schools was put in operation between 1840 and 1850, but for lack of one central leader or head, and lack of uniformity of administration, chaos and failure resulted.

The educational history of our State from 1850, extending over a period of the next sixteen years, centers around the character and deeds of Calvin H. Wiley. He was elected in December, 1852, and on January 1, 1853, at the age of thirty-four, assumed the duties of the Superintendent of Common Schools, a newly made and responsible office.

(1) Sprunt, J., *Chronicles of the Cape Fear River*. Edwards and Broughton, Raleigh; 1916. Page 545.

The new Superintendent of Common Schools began at once many needed reforms, one very important provision being the securing and preparing of teachers for the work.

Doctor Joyner in his address at the unveiling of a monument to Calvin H. Wiley in Winston in 1904 said, "Under his shaping hand, the system grew and improved and the schools prospered until it could be truthfully said at the beginning of the war between the States that North Carolina had the best system of common schools in the South."⁽¹⁾

In addition to the schools of the town of Wilmington there were in the county, New Hanover Academy, 1833; Rock Fish Academy, 1834; Black Creek Female Institution, 1834; Union, 1834; Rocky Point, 1867. The one school that contributed the most toward the building of a broader education was the "Union Free School!"

The name Union was applied to any school in which private and public interests were united in accordance with an act of the General Assembly.

(1) Sprunt, J., Chronicles of the Cape Fear River. Edwards and Broughton, Raleigh; 1916. Page 547.

A history of the Union Free School from 1856 to 1862 is given in a letter from John W. Barnes to Silas N. Martin.

A meeting of citizens was held in the summer of 1856 in the vicinity of the "Oaks", and it was decided to raise the necessary money and material for the purchase of a lot and the construction of a building. The deed was executed November 3, 1856, to James Green, John Barnes, and Thomas Freshwater, as trustees, and the same recorded December 31st.

In April, 1857, a meeting of the subscribers was held in the new building, in which it was decided to start the school the first of May and to continue three months experimentally. Mr. Martin, Mr. Van Bokkelen, and Mr. Fanning were appointed to employ a teacher and put the Union Free School in operation. The Board of Superintendents of Common Schools for New Hanover cooperated with the committee, whereby they received the benefit of all the funds appropriated, which agreement existed until July 1, 1863, a period of six years. The school house originally seated one hundred pupils. In 1859 a room capable of holding forty scholars was added. On

account of the absence of Mr. Martin from the State in 1862, Mr. B. G. Worth was appointed his successor, and nobly sustained the school from his private means in connection with the amount received from the common school fund.

The largest enrollment at one time was one hundred and forty-five, the smallest about one hundred, this being the number for the summer months of June and July.⁽¹⁾

Wilmington Free Public School System from 1870 to 1880.

In the case of every great enterprise or achievement, interest in its first beginning increases with the passing of the years. While personal knowledge and first hand information concerning the event diminishes, proportionately with each generation. At this present time, when the city's rapid growth and increase in population make the expansion and enlargement of her school accommodations imperative inquiry is frequently made concerning the origin of this most important and vital enterprise.

So closely and intimately was the work of Miss Amy Morris Bradley interwoven with Wilming-

(1) Sprunt, J., Chronicles of the Cape Fear River. Edwards and Broughton, Raleigh; 1916. Page 547.

ton's early public school system, that her labors should always receive the public recognition which is justly due.

1. The Hemenway and the Union Schools were made possible by her influence and suggestion.

2. There was always cooperation between her private interests and the community's public interest.

3. Modern methods of teaching were brought to her schools by trained and skillful teachers who in turn trained other teachers.

4. In 1870 she received the sum of \$1266.71 from the State Fund which indicated the recognition of her schools by the State.

5. After the opening of the new brick Tileston building in October, 1871, the Union schoolhouse, in which was taught the Tileston Normal school, composed from the Union grammar school, passed into the hands of the county.

6. The new building by a deed of gift became the property of the City of Wilmington in 1901, through the mediation of Mr. James H. Chadbourn, a personal friend of Mrs. Hemenway.

Accordingly, on October 9, 1872, the old Union and Hemenway buildings were abandoned, turned over to the free school committee, and the schools

were combined and established under the name of the Tileston Normal school in the new brick building. The cornerstone had been laid with considerable ceremony, November 31, 1871. The building was erected under the supervision of James Walker, a builder of Wilmington, at a cost of \$30,000.⁽¹⁾

This school continued to be popular until the summer of 1886. During all this period \$5,000 was donated by Mrs. Hemenway for support and maintenance. This amount, together with a small tuition fee, afforded ample funds to carry on the work.

When the decade of 1870 to 1880 dawned upon the people of North Carolina interference by the United States Government with the affairs which rightfully belong to a state had begun to disappear. The people were deeply gratified at the improved condition of affairs, and the large gain made by friends of the South in Congress was also a source of optimism. Energy and industry were fast removing the traces of the war as individuals bravely struggled to regain their shattered fortunes. During this period a change of feeling be-

(1) Sprunt, J., Chronicles of the Cape Fear River. Edwards and Broughton; Raleigh; 1916. Page 549.

gan to be felt in New Hanover County in regard to the attitude of the people toward free public education. Always before this time the "well-to-do people" and those who are usually spoken of as "the four hundred", disregarded and entirely ignored the free public schools. The name "free public schools" seemed to carry reproach with it. In fact, until recent times, the boast of attending a "pay school" seemed to carry with it a mark of personal distinction.

For the year 1870 and 1871 a reference to the free schools of the city is made in a letter to the commissioners of New Hanover County by James H. Chadbourn, William T. Carr, and William A. French. They said, "In the last communication you were informed that there were no school houses within the limits of the township belonging to the state or county."⁽¹⁾

The committee subsequently, with the approval of the Board and the Superintendent of Public Instruction, purchased the Hemenway school house of Miss Amy M. Bradley for \$3,000, with the promise on her part that the money she received from it

(1) Sprunt, J., Chronicles of the Cape Fear River. Edwards and Broughton; Raleigh; 1916. Page 550.

should be expended in continuing her two schools, then in successful operation.

The cost of sustaining the Hemenway and Union schools for two years was \$10,850.40. \$1,266.70 from the State; \$2,500.00 from the Peabody Fund; \$3,000.00 from the sale of the Hemenway school house, and the balance, \$4,083.70, from the friends of Miss Bradley and her work.

It seems to the committee that the beneficial influence of the schools for the young of the city
(1)
can not be overestimated.

The Wilmington Post of April 11, 1872, gives an account of the visit of State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Alexander McIver, at this time, to the city of Wilmington. It says: "Mr. McIver comes to the work of educating the masses and the establishment of free schools throughout the State of North Carolina. His desire now is to interest the public in his work. He desires that united effort be made at once, so as to secure some complete system for the successful establishment of the schools in the City of Wilmington, by the city, as provided in its charter amended in 1868."

(1) Sprunt, J., Chronicles of the Cape Fear River. Edwards and Broughton, Raleigh; 1916. Page 550.

About this time a campaign of enlightenment was carried on under the direction of the Legislature, by Dr. E. A. Alderman and C. D. McIver. They met with the teachers in every county and taught them how to teach. They had public meetings, educational rallies, they made eloquent speeches, and urged the people to vote taxes to support schools.

After reading about and seeing the great influence these two men exerted we can readily see why educational progress in North Carolina has been easier.

Information with regard to the two free public schools, Union and Hemenway, between 1872 and 1882, is vague and indefinite. The year 1882, however, marked the beginning of an effective organization in the city schools of Wilmington. With an executive head whose office was that of Superintendent of City Public Schools, the system then began to assume a different aspect as a factor in the educational life of the city.⁽¹⁾

The situation is best described by the Superintendent himself, Mr. M. C. S. Noble, who was elected in the summer of 1882 to this responsible office. Previous to this the authority over

[&]
(1) Sprunt, J., *Chronicles of the Cape Fear River*.
Edwards and Broughton, Raleigh; 1916. Page 557.

the two white and colored districts was vested in the county superintendent. It does not take a vivid imagination to see the situation as it appeared to him at that time. In referring to his first visit to the schools, he said, "I pictured to myself, large, imposing buildings, situated in well kept grounds, when our buggy stopped in deep sand out in front of the old Union School on Sixth Street, between Nun and Church, and just in the rear of Fifth Street Methodist Church. It contained three rooms and had a seating capacity of one hundred twenty-five pupils. There were three teachers and the average attendance was one hundred. Lastly, we went to the Hemenway, then situated on the lot directly south of St. Andrews Church on Fourth Street. It was a little cottage-looking affair, with four rooms, a seating capacity of about one hundred fifty pupils, and had an average of about one hundred twenty-five."⁽¹⁾

In the paragraph on "School Building" there appeared this reference: "The Hemenway Building

(1) Sprunt, J., Chronicles of the Cape Fear River. Edwards and Broughton, Raleigh; 1916. Page 552.

for whites is well arranged and well supplied with comfortable seats. The Union Building in White District No. 2 is comfortable, but in every other respect it is entirely unfit for school purposes. After many years of waiting and vexatious delay, the committee hopes to have a handsome building ready for occupancy next fall." His wish was realized as the following extract shows. "In 1886, the pupils were moved from the old school into the handsome new Union Building at the northwest corner of Sixth and Ann. It contained eight large schoolrooms and a beautiful hall."⁽¹⁾

In the spring of 1891 the Union School was burned, it had caught from a defective flue and was completely destroyed. The new Union was built upon the foundation of the old one, and on the first Monday of the following October the new building was occupied. In 1889 a building like the Union was built upon a lot running then from Fifth to Sixth, between Chestnut and Walnut, which had been purchased through the advice of Mr. Horace Bagg.

(1) Sprunt, J., Chronicles of the Cape Fear River. Edwards and Broughton, Raleigh; 1916. Page 552.

In the summer vacation of 1897 some one set fire to the new Hemenway which was completely destroyed as the Union had been six years before. This school, also, was at once rebuilt, and turned over ready for the opening on the first Monday in October in that year.

The high school as an organic part of the public school system had its origin at a very recent date. Before 1890, most of the graded school reports showed only provision for primary and grammar grade instruction.

The Superintendent's report for Wilmington, 1886, shows a provision for six grades only. We find no reference to a high school in this report. It was evidently intended that the private schools which had flourished in the towns and cities for a long time should take care of advanced work. In fact by many it seemed to be regarded as their rightful heritage and possession.

There was during this time, 1890 to 1900, an aggressive opposition to the public high school idea. So determined was the opposition in the interest of the existing academies that some of the citizens of Raleigh had a law passed forbidding the teaching of high school subjects in the public schools. But later, the Raleigh Academy gave way to the high school, its principal becoming

the principal of the high school.

The high school idea began to take shape in the mind of the superintendent of Wilmington after the schools were moved into the new Hemenway and Union School buildings. He began by gradually adding high school subjects thus enriching the course of study.

The school committee being conscious of the gap between the grammar school and the state university decided to take the step to bridge this gap which has been quite successful. As evidence of their faith in the new idea, they bought, at this time, a lot on the corner of Third and Market Streets, where the Colonial Inn now stands, and moved the advanced classes from the lower schools into the little one-story schoolhouse just south of the courthouse, on Third Street.

This remained Wilmington's high school until 1897, when the advanced classes from the Hemenway, Union and Third Street schools, numbering in all one hundred, with four teachers, moved into the Tileston Normal Building. This building came into the control of the city through the personal efforts of Mr. James H. Chadbourn, then chairman of the joint committee.

In May, 1898, the first graduating exercises were held and certificates were presented to three girl graduates. Each year the increases have been gratifying and the schools have increased in proportion with the growth of the city.

CONCLUSION

The citizens of towns and cities of North Carolina who contributed of their means by private donations, by their votes for a school tax on the race basis, and finally, with no financial discrimination as to race, did splendid constructive and suggestive work for public education.

They showed what could be done by community effort which was aided by the Peabody Fund. This fund was established primarily to help the educational needs. But the influence was worth more than the aid, because of its stimulation of local enterprise and community patriotism, in the gradual rise of city and town school systems, in encouragement to the final establishment of a complete state system of schools, and in the gradual removal of hostility to education for the freedmen.

As peace and prosperity came to the people of North Carolina they began to feel the need of a school system that would include all the grades and also bridge the gap that had been left by the private schools. Some of the far

seeing educational leaders as far back as Calvin H. Wiley saw the need for the graded school system in cities and towns, but the times were too full of war and conflict to think of such an undertaking.

The question of funds was the ever present problem, but the people of Greensboro knew how to solve this problem. They voted a special school tax for their district, and later doubled this tax which gave them enough funds for their schools. The Greensboro schools have grown from year to year to match the growth of the city, thereby setting an example which has been followed by many cities and towns in North Carolina.

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